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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the study of three schools participating in a school-improvement initiative carried out by the Board of Education of the City of New York, the Fund for New York City Public Education (the Fund), and the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) during the 1990-91 school year. The project, the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement, involved 25 New York City public schools that accepted the assistance of IBM manager trainers in the supervision of their School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM) teams. Methodology involved observation, document analysis, and interviews with key participants--IBM managers, school administrators, and team members. Follow-up interviews and observations were conducted one year later in the spring of 1992. Using Bolman and Deal's framework for structural and political approaches to decision making, the findings suggest that controversy and factionalism among team members, who viewed their concerns from the political perspective, was the greatest barrier to the implementation of IBM's structural methods. None of the three schools attempted to retain IBM facilitation in the following year. An implication is that the structural approach of the business community must be merged with the more political process of the school community. Recommendations are made for SBM/SDM teams and business-education cooperation. True bottom-up reform requires strategies developed within the context of school life. One table is included. (LMI)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

# LESSONS ON CORPORATE INTERVENTION INTO SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper documents the study of three schools participating in a school improvement initiative carried out by the combined efforts of the Board of Education of the City of New York, a foundation called the Fund for New York City Public Education (the Fund) and the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) during the 1990-91 school year. This project, called the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement involved 25 New York City public schools which accepted the assistance of IBM manager trainers in the supervision of their School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM) teams. The primary purpose of this assistance was to help the teams organize themselves and develop expertise in strategic or long-range planning. A facilitator from IBM worked with each team to train them in strategic planning techniques. The most important intervention by IBM was a fully-funded two day retreat for the SBM/SDM teams to work on their strategic plans. To document the progress of the project, the Fund asked for the assistance of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching at Teacher's College, Columbia University. Researchers from this organization documented the progress of six schools involved in the project throughout the 1990-1991 school year. In-depth case studies of the collaboration between the IBM managers and three of these participating schools make up the core of the research presented in this paper.

In order to frame the study of these three schools, theories developed by social scientists Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal were used. According to their explanation of the management of organizations, large, corporate organizations such as IBM would promote what they term a **structural** approach, emphasizing goals, levels of authority and rules of accountability. Groups such as SBM/SDM teams, on the other hand, would follow a **political** approach wherein decisions would be made through the interaction of competing interest groups. Important decisions in the teams would revolve around the allocation of scarce resources - especially the use of time.

During this study, the following questions were asked: What aspects of the structural approach does IBM exhibit in its assistance to the schools? What aspects of the political approach do the school SBM/SDM teams demonstrate? What happens when the structural approach, especially strategic planning, is applied to the essentially political organization of SBM/SDM teams? How can strategic planning be designed so that a future management team can take into account the political nature of SBM/SDM?

## BACKGROUND

As the decade of the 1990s began, national attention began to focus on the decline of the economic strength of the nation. Rising unemployment and losses in productivity indicated fundamental problems in the nation's growth and stability. Moreover, these losses were perceived to be due, in part, to a deterioration in the educational system. Grim assessments were made of student achievement. It was theorized by some policymakers that students who graduated with inferior skills became poor workers which, in turn, lead to uncompetitive industry, failing businesses and a weakened economy.

Leaders in government and education sought to find new partners in the pursuit of revitalized schools and a prevailing belief existed that schools and business should be linked even more closely (Holt, 1993). In his plan to address problems in the educational system, America 2000, president George Bush made it clear that his administration expected American business to play a major role in the push for educational excellence. While this concept of public school reform driven by the business community is popular with some reformers and government officials, the practical development of this business assistance is less clear.

Business has traditionally been detached from the operations of local schools. It has been a relatively recent event that the business community has put more than tax dollars and yearbook

advertisements into schools and in fact, many businesses still have little to do with school improvement. This is especially the case for businesses in small communities and in rural areas where they routinely try to cut back school activities to reduce tax increases. (Mann, 1987)

Nevertheless, there are indications that important business leaders in urban areas and within large corporations are looking to help the schools. In some cases, businesses have sought to become partners with their local schools, especially in the areas of management. But this involvement has been in varying degrees and with varying amounts of success. While some partnerships have resulted in tangible and meaningful benefits for both parties, many others have produced only confusion and poorly attended awards banquets. Bringing outsiders into a school to catalyze change can be a challenging and often frustrating exercise for both the business and the school.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Moreover, the confidence that business may be successful in systemic reform may have been caused by misunderstandings of the organizational management approaches prevalent in both schools and business. If one uses the theoretical framework developed by social theorists Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal in their approach to understanding the management of organizations, it can be argued that in the overall management of operations, corporations such as IBM use a **structural** approach, concerning themselves largely with objectives, goals, rules and procedures. Rationality is the central motif in this perspective. Organizations in this model are characterized by clear levels of management, definite goals, specific job roles and tight linkage within the various divisions of the organization. When analyzing the performance of their company from this perspective, most managers first look at morale, productivity and effectiveness in terms of the structure of the organization. The levels of management, rules and communication throughout the organization are examined and often rearranged (1984).

For those that view organizations through this structural perspective there are a half dozen core assumptions, as identified by Bolman and Deal. The theorists assert first that structures can be systematically designed and run. This is because organizations exist to accomplish certain goals and there is a structure appropriate to those goals, the surrounding environment, and the participants. Organizations work best when troubles outside the organization and the personal preferences of the participants are held in check by rational procedures. In addition, specialization permits higher levels of individual expertise and performance. Coordination and control are accomplished best through the exercise of authority and impartial rules.

An important corollary of these assumptions is the concept that problems within an organization are due to flaws in the design of the structure. Therefore, all organizational problems can be rectified with redesign or reorganization. Looking at the schools from this perspective, the IBM corporation was expected to appropriately assign duties and effectively plan future actions.

Contrary to this conception of management held by IBM, however, is what Bolman and Deal refer to as the **political** approach. Social theorists that look at organizations from the political approach see them as arenas where political battles are waged among competing interest groups and individuals. Although there are a variety of proponents of the political approach, Bolman and Deal summarize the political framework into five basic propositions. First, all organizations are composed of interest groups. These interest groups and individuals all have differing beliefs and ideals. Moreover, important decisions in organizations revolve around the allocation of scarce resources. Because organizational goals and decisions occur from negotiations, power and conflict are central to the life of an organization. Often efforts to clarify values or to establish clear orders of preference merely force hidden motivations, and covert goals onto the agenda - only intensifying the conflict between factions (Landau and Stout, 1979).

Political theorists view many modern organizations operating in an environment filled with

ambiguity where problems are not easily solved by available resources. According to theorists of this school such as March and Olsen, public institutions such as schools are often plagued by problematic goals, unclear procedures and irregular participation (1982). Conflicts arise over decisions and the control of resources.

Furthermore, while examining these schools and their work with IBM, it was also important to understand the unusual nature of the SBM/SDM teams. While the schools were working with the facilitation of IBM, they were also responding to initiatives from the New York City Board of Education to become involved in the Chancellor's SBM/SDM initiative (also called Circular 41) or through the Corridor initiative. These initiatives called for a significant departure from traditional, autocratic school management.

In the place of a rigid hierarchy of administration, the schools were asked to develop a SBM/SDM council or team of teachers, administrators, parents and community members to participate in aspects of management of the school. They were to shape curriculums, alter schedules and even have an advisory role in the school budget in order to improve their school.

This process, for the most part, was entirely new to the schools involved. The newness of this kind of shared decision-making proved to be an organizational challenge to all of the case study schools. Roles were expected to alter, responsibilities were supposed to shift and procedures were allowed to be changed. Uncertainty surrounding the goals of school-based management and problems concerning the sharing of power had already surfaced in other school districts like Rochester, N.Y. (Bradley and Olsen, 1993). The IBM facilitators were called in during a turbulent time for the schools involved. For their part, the representatives from IBM understood that they were to help these fledgling teams as best they could to assist the SBM/SDM teams by helping to organize their roles, delegate responsibilities and prioritize their long term objectives.

## DOCUMENTATION METHODOLOGIES

To study the consequences of importing business management techniques into SBM/SDM teams, this study conducted three case studies of a high school and two elementary schools participating in the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement. The three schools were chosen for their different locations throughout the city, diversity of students and experience of SBM/SDM teams.[1] Characteristics of the participating schools and their SBM/SDM teams can be seen on page 7.

The following are short descriptions of each school studied:

**Captain Billop High School** - Although situated in an affluent community with long established traditions of stability, it welcomes students from all five boroughs. A majority of the 400 students are from black and Hispanic families. It is a small high school opened in 1989 and was designed to help students who have been unable to complete their degrees in other high schools. There are only 17 staff and they come to the school from a variety of different schools and teaching situations. Many came to the school through alternative certification and worked on a per diem basis.

**Howe Elementary School** - This school serves about 400 children and is located within a working class Brooklyn community. Although most of the residents own their homes, each home may be used by a large, extended family. Many of the children were born in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, and Jamaica. The faculty turnover at Howe is low, and most of the teachers have had many years of experience in the building.

**Rutledge Elementary School** - This school is located in a Queens neighborhood undergoing a steady population shift from small middle class families to larger (and significantly poorer) families newly immigrated to this country. In the span of only three years the student population has jumped from 650 to 1,000. Because many of the students come from disadvantaged homes, the school was reclassified a Chapter I school in 1990.

The primary source of data was extensive interviews with all key participants such as the IBM managers, school administrators and SBM/SDM team members. Regular observations were carried out on the introductory training seminars held by IBM for the SBM/SDM teams, the SBM/SDM team

[1] In order to preserve anonymity, all school names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Table 1

**Comparison of Case Study Schools in IBM/Fund Initiative**

| | Borough | Kind of school | Race/ Ethnicity | Principal Experience | SBM/SDM Formation Date | Team Composition | History before SBM/SDM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Howe Elem. | Brooklyn | Zoned | 90% Afcn-A | 2 yrs. | Summer 1990 | 2 co-chairs, princ. a.p., 6 tchrs., 2 parents, CBO rep. | CSIP - Faculty and parents bonded against previous dictatorial principal. |
| Rutledge Elem. | Queens | Zoned | 50% Hisp. 30% white 15% Asian 7 % Afcn-A | 5 yrs. | Fall 1988 | chair, princ., UFT rep., 6 tchrs., 2 parents | Schools for Tomorrow Today (previous year) |
| Captain Billop H. | Manhattan | Academic | 80% Afn-A, 20% Latino | 1 yr. | Fall 1990 | chair, princ., a.p., 6 tchrs., CBO rep., 2 parents | No formal team before, although faculty had met informally as a group before SBM/SDM |



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meetings and of the debriefing meetings held at IBM headquarters. To gauge the "survivability"or lasting impact of the project, interviews and observations were also conducted in the three schools in March and April of 1992, the year following the project. The study also made use of relevant official and unofficial documents from the schools such as newsletters, correspondence to the Fund, team meeting minutes and agendas. Documentation from IBM included facilitator surveys, "action plans", correspondence and public relations documents.

## SUMMARIES OF CASE HISTORIES

These case history summaries are presented to briefly explain the implementation of the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement in each school. First, a brief description of the training provided to the IBM facilitators is included.

### IBM Facilitator Training

In preparation for the initiative, both the Fund and the Board of Education made a concerted effort to train the facilitators for the school environment. This training was carried out on July 12 and 13 at IBM headquarters in Manhattan. The first day of this training included a variety of speeches by the organizers, an introduction of all the participants and a description of the schools from various Board of Education personnel and several IBM staff who worked with the schools.

On the second day the organizers talked to the facilitators about effective facilitation strategies. To a great extent this training exemplified the structural approach in its emphasis on clear goals, timeliness and written plans. The cornerstone of their structural approach was what IBM termed "Brain Writing and Action Planning" or more generally, "strategic planning." This general concept of formulating a long range plan that attempts to guide management through everyday decisions by a framework of overall goals was not unique to IBM management, but according to them their own version of strategic planning had proven effective in many ways and in many management

areas throughout the corporation.

Later that day the organizers went over some of the more important logistics and timetables of the upcoming retreat. They emphasized sensitivity to the needs of the school as well as a commitment to translating the team plans into action agenda. In a handout to the facilitators IBM and the Fund urged, "Be a pusher - keep things on track...help the schools move from a preconceived agenda. . . It's like running a large account planning session." Briefed on the essential components of strategic planning, the most important characteristics of effective plans and some basics of meeting rules and procedures, the IBM facilitators then waited for their assignments to the participating schools. In September of 1990 they were given the names of their schools.

**Captain Billop High School**

Since the school had started only the year before, the SBM/SDM team at Captain Billop High (C.B.H.) had not had much experience in meeting procedure or in the understanding of group dynamics. They had sought out the assistance of IBM to help them with the basics of team management and to expedite team decisions. The SBM/SDM team met about twice a month for about two hours in the afternoons. The group usually consisted of the principal, the assistant principal, a guidance counselor, eight teachers, a teacher who also served as the union representative, two parents and the community coordinator.

The team met with their IBM facilitator several times and then attended a two-day retreat at the IBM Advanced Business Institute in Palisades, N Y. During the two days the team, with the help of their facilitator, worked out several long-range plans or "action plans." He introduced them to planning techniques such as "brain writing" (more widely known as brainstorming), the listing of "inhibitors" or obstacles to overcome, and how to build consensus.

Discussion at the retreat revealed mistrust by the faculty on the team over the administration's

allocation of compensation time and payments for overtime. After lengthy negotiation plans were devised to make the allocation process simpler and more open to staff review. Concerns over the school budget were also aired. At times during the retreat, however, negotiations became acrimonious since all three issues were controversial at C.B.H.

Although both the facilitator and the team appeared to make a strong effort towards creating long-range plans, problems arose during the retreat and afterwards concerning the overall relationship between the facilitator and the team. This soon became evident at the post-retreat meetings of the team. The team agreed with the IBM manager's comments but sometimes disagreed with parts of the action plans he had written up from the retreat. Several on the team stated that in his effort to expedite decision-making, he had forced decisions upon the team. Other members of the SBM/SDM team accused the administration of changing their position after the retreat, while the principal and assistant principal maintained they had been misinterpreted.

Nevertheless, the team did move forward on its action plans. Plans concerning compensation time, payments for overtime and the school budget were carried out. Relations between the facilitator and factions on the team, however, did not improve. This problem reached its climax in the middle of December when the group held a vote to decide whether to retain the services of the facilitator or to decline his further offers of help. After a lengthy discussion, the team voted to retain his services.

As spring arrived the original momentum of the IBM/Fund project faded. With the advent of the city's budget crisis, the staff feared budget cuts, particularly since many of the staff were working on a per diem basis. Discussions at the meetings were easily derailed by conjectures about the school budget in the following year. Several meetings in March were canceled.

In the final few months, however, the team and the facilitator did seem to return to regular and amicable relations. He attended the last two meetings and participated in some of their

discussions. He told the group he could not work with them because his office had been transferred to Europe, but said he was proud that he had kept them focused on certain action plans and working towards established goals.

**Howe Elementary School**

When a former principal left Howe Elementary several years before, there had been an interim period during which the teachers and assistant principal temporarily banded together to run the school until the new principal was hired. This interim period showed the teachers and several of the parents that they could work together and get things done by themselves. The team at Howe was made up of the principal, the assistant principal, three parents, eight teachers and the union representative who was also a teacher.

The team that joined the project was largely modeled after their old C.S.I.P. team which had been formed in response to a state-mandated initiative. In that instance, the school had been one of 400 schools in New York City targeted for improvement by the New York State Education Department's Comprehensive Assessment Report Program. The school team was required to develop plans and demonstrate improvement in curricular areas named by the State Education Department and the Board of Education of the City of New York. They had been successful in developing innovative improvement plans.

The team at Howe Elementary worked hard during the project year to create their own base of resources. They usually met after school on Mondays every other week. Although the staff volunteered time, the team itself had been allocated about $13,000 by their district office for their activities. This immediately gave them funding and resources to pursue their objectives. In January of 1991, the team was also awarded a $10,000 Parent Improvement Plan grant from their local school board.

At the beginning of the project, the IBM manager met with the team and then they also attended the November 16-17 retreat. At the retreat the facilitator attempted to work on larger planning issues. During the retreat she asked them a variety of questions - constantly trying to get them to think about where they were at that time and where they wanted to go. ("What do we have? What do we want? What don't we want?") The team worked on the idea of their identity and attempted to define their role. The team and the administration worked on ways to better define their decision-making roles. The principal agreed that she would honor decisions made by the SBM/SDM team. Plans were also made to expand the educational horizons of the school, foster parent and community involvement, create a nurturing multi-cultural environment and instill a sense of community into the school.

Relations between the team and the facilitator abated, however, in the aftermath of the retreat. For reasons unknown, the facilitator appears to have maintained only minimal contact with the team after the retreat, although accounts vary as to the amount of contact the facilitator had with the team. The impact of the retreat was also negated by a substantial delay in the delivery of the feedback and action planning notes from the November 16-17 retreat by the IBM manager. A draft of the feedback report produced by the facilitator was delivered to the group soon after the retreat, but it was returned, according to one teacher, in order to have "some things edited out." Some said they felt statements made about the administration or the effectiveness of the school, or the team, would be misinterpreted by outsiders.

Regardless, the team moved on and initiated staff reading workshops and parent math and bilingual workshops, adopted a school-wide writing program, improved the library program, upgraded the school's computer system and increased parent and community involvement. A debate about the heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping of students which had been touched upon at the November retreat, remained controversial throughout the year, especially into spring of 1991. The

administration favored heterogeneous grouping while most of the teachers preferred homogeneous grouping. In April of 1991, the team surveyed the teachers within the school to get a general idea of faculty opinion on class groupings. Further input from the faculty resulted in grouping decisions for each grade. For example, the first grade teachers decided they would do groupings by "A & B" for separating into to reading levels, but the second grade teachers opted for grouping by three levels of reading ability.

Members of the SBM/SDM team did research on the topic, however, and found that all of the research supported heterogeneous grouping. But the team also decided that "based on the administration's comments made at the [November] retreat" the team could say no to heterogeneous grouping if that was what the majority of the teachers wanted. According to a team chair, however, the principal eventually did not respect the decision of the team, but reserved the right to make her own decision. This decision by the principal frustrated many members of the team.

At the end of the year, the IBM facilitator held another one-day retreat at the IBM headquarters in Manhattan. Most people on the SBM/SDM team said they appreciated that the June retreat gave them the opportunity to review their work over the year and to suggest new projects for the 1991-1992 year. The IBM manager did not offer to help the team in the following year.

**Rutledge Elementary School**

Members of Rutledge Elementary had decided to form a SBM/SDM team in 1988. Several of the members had already had some experience at shared decision-making. One of the team members, the union representative, had been active in national restructuring debates and activities. The union representative and the principal had been instrumental in signing the group on to a project called "Schools for Tomorrow. . . Today". This project was run by the New York Teacher Centers Consortium of the United Federation of Teachers. Through the union sponsored

training and the help of two Teacher Centers Consortium facilitators the group found that they could collaborate and produce changes in the school. In the beginning stages during 1988 and 1989 they struggled with start-up problems such as staff conflicts, communication breakdowns and time constraints. Parents were not comfortable with teachers and teachers did not know how much they should explain to the parents. But generally the team said they felt that the first two years of their shared-decision making had produced tangible results, especially in the implementation of a Whole Language program.

The team met every other week on Fridays afternoons. Sometimes they met once a week when they needed extra time. The team usually consisted of the principal, the UFT representative, the team chair, two parents, and six teachers. While the principal did urge some members to join the team, most joined out of their own interest.

The IBM facilitator assigned to the Rutledge team came and observed the team during one of their meetings before the November retreat. He explained the strategic planning process and his role as a facilitator. He said he conceived of his facilitator role as someone to keep the team on track and to bring planning experience to their activities.

At the retreat at the Advanced Business Institute on November 16-17, the facilitator moved the group through various exercises to help the team envision what they would like to accomplish for the school. He stressed that the goals must be "attainable, measurable and time oriented." As the team talked about what they had done and where they wanted to go their comments reflected the struggles they had experienced in trying to adapt to the many changes brought about by Chapter 1 programs, including the numerous pull-out programs.

These discussions bogged down, however, when the facilitator tried to get the team to channel their thoughts and ideas into categories, especially objectives. Personal problems brought up by several members of the team disrupted much of the November retreat and action-planning techniques

pursued by the SBM/SDM team were often stalled. Continued efforts by the IBM manager to work out team strategies in the meetings after the retreat were also frustrated by overwhelming concerns about team roles and responsibilities.

The following month the team suffered the loss of their principal; he had been with the school over five years. He had supported the efforts of the team throughout its existence, and often checked on the progress of the subcommittees. His departure in December distressed many people on the team and left them without a leader and their main visionary. Without his leadership the team drifted throughout much of early 1991. The new principal, while accepting of the SBM/SDM team, did not make it a priority. A temporary replacement for the last principal, she did not make any effort to understand or incorporate strategic planning into the work of the team or of the school.

Towards the end of January 1991 the team held a one day retreat at an upstate conference center with the assistance of their IBM facilitator. This meeting was considered a success by the team members because it gave them time to complete some plans in the works such as better defining their role and organizing some of their operating procedures. But as the year ended, much of the planning done at this retreat had yet to be carried out. The IBM manager did not attend many of the later meetings and factionalism between parents and teachers increased as new (and more assertive) parents became involved with the team, vocalizing their own demands about school issues. A new facilitator from the Office of the Chancellor was assigned to the team as the IBM facilitator ended his work with the team.

## FINDINGS

The structural and political theories, as framed by social theorists Bolman and Deal, were used to examine the sites, the interaction of the teams and their IBM facilitators, and the results. In all of the teams studied, the IBM managers exhibited many aspects of the structural approach as they helped the teams compose strategic or "action plans" which outlined SBM/SDM team roles, responsibilities and scheduled delivery dates. When they attended meetings, the facilitators also promoted order by stressing methodical group procedures and focusing on prevailing tasks. When confronting conflict, they tended to seek out the means of authority to solve the conflict. Two of the IBM facilitators stressed evaluation as a means of checking progress towards goals defined by the teams.

In reviewing these three sites, however, it appears that controversy among the members of the teams proved to be the greatest barrier to the implementation of IBM's structural methods. Part of it was due to the newness of SBM/SDM, which led to procedural confusion about policy, and part of it appears to have been due to a structural approach that did not take into account the largely political domain of decision-making within the public schools.

Data from these schools suggests that the teams often viewed their concerns through the political perspective. When the structural approach was applied in this political context, concerns over the decision-making authority of the teams were never entirely resolved as the administration of the schools vacillated on actual lines of authority existing within the teams. Furthermore, the teams demonstrated factionalism between the teachers and the administration, or in the case of Rutledge Elementary, parents quarrelled among themselves or repeatedly questioned teachers and the administration on school issues.

Goal setting, which can be considered a structural approach, also became an opportunity for various factions on the teams to realign their power. Meetings at C.B.H and Howe were both

disrupted by disputes over which goals were most important. Often school administrators differed with their teams over the priority of certain objectives.

Factionalism was also accompanied by differing viewpoints by those involved. For the administration, the work by the facilitator was largely de-emphasized; they considered it praiseworthy but not necessarily practical. On the other hand, those who made up the less influential factions such as the teachers and the parents, viewed the assistance by IBM as an opportunity for advancement of their own agendas. Occasionally, the facilitator would become involved in disputes between the administration and the teachers. The facilitators were also seen as potential allies for both sides, and on occasion both the teachers and the administration sought their counsel.

Yet, there is also data suggesting that the teams tended to accept only selected parts of the IBM assistance. They would take parts of the structural approach presented by their facilitator, such as "brain writing" and the listing of inhibitors, but ignore other techniques explained to them. This was especially true in an experienced team such as the one operating at Howe.

In some cases, and especially in the Rutledge school, factionalism in the form of personal grievances or disputes overwhelmed future plans of the team and the school. Persons on the team did not seem to see goal setting or evaluation as a means of placing pressure on the administration, but they instead used these moments to state opinions about personal matters. Neither the structural nor political approach seemed prevalent.

In all of the schools, the structural approach promoted by the facilitators tended to recede due to inconsistent follow-up from the first retreat. Although the facilitators appeared to follow the progress of the teams throughout the year, and generally conducted closure activities such as final meetings and retreats, early planning efforts and strategic plans often lost direction and momentum by the spring of 1991. None of the case study schools made efforts to retain IBM facilitation in the following year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SBM/SDM TEAMS

The above findings, however, do not mean that the structural approach is irrelevant to school organizations, especially school-based management teams. Instead it means that in some circumstances the structural approach, as promoted by the business community, must be merged with the more political process of the school community in order to be useful. Both approaches when combined appropriately can provide an effective means for designing further initiatives of this kind.

Accepting this premise, planners of future business/school collaborations with the structural approach should anticipate the following developments during these group activities:

**Planning** - During planning exercises the SBM/SDM teams will make a genuine effort to produce rational, logical plans, but these plans may be the source of conflict between factions within the teams. Facilitators from outside the school must take this into account and stay in close communication with all members of the team while attempting to address the aspirations of all representatives within the team plans. This may require multi-stage or multi-purpose strategic plans.

Strategic planning techniques should be brought into play in order to design plans that include alternative futures based upon several different planning contingencies, so that the SBM/SDM teams can respond to a variety of changes in budget, personnel, and school conditions. All interest groups on the team should be given input into these various planning alternatives. This inclusion of alternatives makes it easier for the teams to modify their plans in the face of changes within the school and the team.

**Goal Setting** - The SDM/SBM teams will strive to set goals acceptable to all interest groups and avoid conflict over these broad, encompassing goals. More narrowly defined goals, (sometimes termed "objectives,") however, will sometimes become the focus of conflict especially when a less powerful faction (e.g. parents) view the goal setting as a means of bringing their interests to the

forefront of the agenda. Moreover, management trainers from the world of business must bear in mind that while most of private enterprise operates under clear goals (such as increases to production, expansion of market share, or broader service to warranties,) schools have a variety of diffuse goals. Because of the diversity and complexity of these goals, facilitators should anticipate concomitant political complexity as well.

Facilitators who come from outside of the context of the school, however, can provide a differing viewpoint on SBM/SDM team activities. They can provide valuable insights into observing the situation, gathering information and defining a problem. School teams that invite the participation of outside facilitators should make use of this unique perspective in the creation of their long term goals.

**Decision Making** - Although the structural approach emphasizes a rational sequence to making decisions, most decisions will be made in the teams through a series of lengthy and possibly contentious discussions. In this case, the facilitators involved with the team must use their talents in group facilitation and knowledge of group process to keep the team linked to their overall plans and established goals. The facilitator may prove to be most helpful in resolving, early on in team activities, the ground rules for team decision making. For example, on one occasion the team at C.B.H. used a voting process which proved to be controversial. In the spirit of shared decision-making, consensus should be encouraged by facilitators, but the team should also agree to acknowledge beforehand those instances when voting may be deemed necessary.

**Resolution of Conflict** - In school-based management, conflict occurs between the various constituencies represented on the team. The business facilitator using the structural approach will look for the resolution of the conflict through the use of authorities, but this will not be an effective approach in most SBM/SDM teams. Clear lines of authority will not be present. The facilitator will have to be aware of the various competing interest groups.

One of the most powerful interest groups will be the administrators of the school. This study suggests that the facilitator will have to co-opt the involvement of the administrators who will be the most likely to undermine the efforts of the teams. Their support early in the program is vital in dealing with the political pressures permeating many of the team activities.

Moreover, data from the study suggests that the facilitator will occasionally be drawn into the support of competing interest groups. The facilitator must anticipate this and strive to help the team arrange amicable bargains or make peaceable compromises without assuming the interests of any particular group. The facilitator should maintain clear communication with the administration, since they will often feel threatened by his or her presence.

**Meeting** - The act of meeting is one of the most important activities of an SBM/SDM group and it is the process which binds all of the various interest groups together. But the facilitator from the business sector must understand that while formalized decisions are sometimes made at these meetings, school decision-making teams often have trouble arranging meetings. Schedules change and available facilities are often inadequate. Moreover, in this climate, constituencies on the SBM/SDM teams see the meeting as an opportunity to realign decision-making power. Therefore, facilitators from the outside intent on helping the schools with strategic planning must bear in mind that the teams need extensive assistance in organizing their meetings. Business personnel can often provide invaluable help in arranging meeting places outside the school, donating supplies and assisting with meeting procedures. They should also lend assistance in helping the teams develop schedules that can accommodate all participants.

**Evaluation** - Apart from testing, educators often eschew formal evaluations. In the case study schools the SBM/SDM teams avoided any formal evaluation process. According to the case studies, this was not due to political factors, but more to a lack of sustained influence by the facilitators. Further efforts by corporate facilitators should explore the use of evaluations as a part of their

structural approach with the teams. It often gives less influential interest groups the opportunity to express their opinions and sometimes provides the opportunity for the resolution of conflict. These evaluations, such as short surveys, regular debriefings and progress reports can serve as a means of not only focusing the planning efforts of the teams, but as a way of bolstering the guiding principles of the SBM/SDM team.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the results of this initiative in the three case study schools reveal some significant obstacles to an integration of the structural approach into the political realm of the SBM/SDM teams, the continued interest by IBM and other American corporations in American schools should be encouraged. The links between the two institutions do provide educators with more resources as well as stimulating, alternative models of management. For business people, the intervention provides the opportunity to serve their local schools. As the IBM trainer at C.B.H. explained, "The company gave all this training to me, and I like the idea of giving some of my experience in this to the community."

Nevertheless, both the design and the implementation process as carried out by IBM, the Board of Education and the Fund, require further improvements. Planners need to recognize the difficulty of merging the educational and the corporate culture, to build on the lessons derived from this study and to look at further research being conducted on school/business collaborations. Specifically, however, this study offers the following general recommendations to both educators and business people who are considering the introduction or expansion of such initiatives.

<u>To avoid political conflict and to increase the opportunities for constructive, sustained structural change the SBM/SDM teams must have more funding and resources made available to them</u>.

It became clear from comparison of the three school sites that the team with the most resources, Howe Elementary, appeared to also have the most parent/faculty/CBO interest. While it

is difficult to support the argument that this factor was the sole cause of the team's successes, political theory would suggest that if the SBM/SDM teams were provided with more resources, they would be better prepared to deal with significant, structurally lead change. While it is not unusual for a reformer to argue in favor of more funding and more resources for the improvement of a project, it is nevertheless apparent from the case studies that in the decentralized design of school-based management the decision-making team or group must have enough discretionary resources to give the team financial authority. Start-up funds appear to expedite initial planning and provide a variety of resources to appease political factions that might ordinarily clash over limited funding.

The team at Howe began with a grant of $13,000 and received an additional $10,000 later in the year. These funds were used for materials, staff development, travel expenses and curriculum supplies. The $10,000 was used to promote parent activities within the school, such as Family Math and Bilingual classes. Similar amounts are recommended for other teams in their start-up year.

<u>The training and planning retreats provided by IBM or other such corporations should be shorter in duration but carried out at least three times over the course of the school year with fewer schools</u>.

In this initiative the planners stressed that most of the planning and training time needed to be spent at the outset, and that once the teams were given an intensive and comprehensive introduction to strategic planning they would be able to follow through on the procedures in their own environment. The case studies indicate, however, the teams experienced difficulty implementing and sustaining the strategic planning techniques introduced. While all of the teams appreciated the opportunity to plan and to deliberate at the Advanced Business Institute, they were disappointed by the inconsistent follow-up on the training.

Instead of starting the initiative with one two-day retreat for 25 schools, IBM should consider more retreats over an extended period of time with fewer schools. It is recommended the schools attend one-day planning retreats in early October, late January and in late May. (The corporation

had initially proposed a three-day retreat in November. While this would have been very difficult to schedule, it seems reasonable to spread out the three days over the life of the initiative.) These retreats should continue to take place outside the school, although luxurious facilities are not necessary. For example, several of the other schools involved in the project met regularly in a conference room at the IBM headquarters in Manhattan. A location such as this is removed from the distractions of the schools, but accessible by public transportation. If time and resources permit, additional half-day planning retreats should also be encouraged. These periodical retreats will greatly assist the teams in keeping track of their goals and measuring their progress.

The contact of the business facilitator to the school teams needs to be better organized and more pervasive.

The facilitator should be included in most, if not all of the meetings of the SBM/SDM teams. Frequent and structured contact with the facilitator would have benefitted all of the SBM/SDM teams. Other studies have shown that limited, introductory descriptions of "how to do it" either in a workshop or in a workbook are rarely enough (Crandal et al, 1986). The facilitators must be there to answer questions, demonstrate skills and provide feedback. It also is suggested that the facilitator be accepted into the physical space of the school. For example, he or she should have a box for messages and perhaps a desk and a chair somewhere in the main office.

Appoint a local school liaison person to assist the facilitator with orientation.

The school or the district should formally appoint someone in a liaison role to the facilitator. Although this happened informally (usually the team chair had the most contact with the facilitator) it is suggested that someone from the school be made responsible for showing the facilities and explaining the group dynamics of the team before the start of the initiative. Armed with this knowledge the IBM facilitators might have found it easier to understand and work with the school team at the outset. Critics and political theorists would argue that the assignment of one person to

be the initial contact to the facilitator would only create unnecessary favoritism, but the initial orientation for the IBM managers for this initiative also appeared flawed since it was done largely by central office employees and foundation officials. IBM facilitators complained after the initiative that while this orientation to the initiative effectively presented an overview of the New York City Public schools it did not give them an accurate picture of what was happening in their own schools.

## CONCLUSION

The planners of SBM/SDM conceived school-based management by a committee as a series of techniques which, with the proper assistance from trained managers, could be implemented within the 25 project schools. But this series of techniques, especially those promoted by IBM, were of limited use to the people on the teams. The IBM facilitators did work to provide their teams with responsive, person-to-person assistance, but while they did sometimes adjust their aims to meet those of their team, the managers found it difficult to import their techniques and structural beliefs on team activities. True bottom-up reform requires strategies developed within the context of school life even if this life is influenced by political forces and confused priorities. Practices validated in the corporate boardroom do not necessarily yield comparable outcomes in the school meeting room. As Ann Lieberman asserts, authentic change in schools must include the values, aspirations, understandings and commitments of the people working in the schools (1992).

In a broader sense, if business is to help facilitate the emergence of local school reform, it must enter the schools ready with new ideas but also ready to listen to the aspirations and commitments of the school people. Rather than insisting on set management techniques, business people working with schools should be underwriting new restructuring decisions and increasing all forms of training and technical assistance with the goals of increasing collaboration and collegiality. They must be committed to helping the SBM/SDM teams over a long period of time with

complicated, inter-acting management decisions about instruction, curriculum and budget. In this way, the school people will understand that the assistance is intended for the improvement themselves and their students and not the fulfillment of Board of Education mandates.

Lastly, the attempt by schools to restructure decision making and planning at the school site is a relatively new aspect of educational policy. Assistance by business to the schools in this restructuring of the school governance is relatively new and experimental. Business leaders have much to offer, but also much to learn. It is hoped that studies such as this will provide a deeper understanding of the context of school change facilitated by business collaboration so that the commitment to the reformation of our nation's schools will not only remain but grow.

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